

April 7, 2005

The Honorable George E. Pataki
Governor, State of New York
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12210

The Honorable Joel A. Giambra
Erie County Executive
95 Franklin St., 16th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

The Honorable Anthony M. Masiello
Mayor, City of Buffalo
City Hall
Buffalo, NY 14202

**RE: COORDINATION OF WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES UNDER
SINGLE, INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Gentlemen:

As I have noted, Western New York in general and the city of Buffalo in particular suffers from a significant level of "development fatigue." Our region continues to suffer from broken promises and dashed hopes – from situations where political leaders stand before the public and promise that new and exciting developments will result, only to have one detail or another prevent these commitments from becoming reality.

As the Member of Congress representing a majority of residents in the city of Buffalo and representing a plurality of residents in Erie County, moving forward with tangible economic development in both the city and county is one of my primary goals. Naturally, I believe that the first and best hope that we as elected leaders have in achieving such a goal is to ensure a sustained and deliberate focus on Buffalo's waterfront areas – both inner and outer harbor.

As we all know, over the past several years, waterfront development has met with mixed levels of success. On the southern end of the Outer Harbor, we have had great success in the completion of phases one and two of the Gallagher Beach project, and with more conversation and effort, we look forward to the opening of an Outer Harbor State Park in 2005, with potential expansion thereof in months and years to come. Unfortunately, as we travel further northward, and in particular as we look to the inner harbor, notwithstanding my predecessor's successes in recommitting funds secured by his predecessor and in securing additional dollars, development has lagged, and promises made have all-too-often not been promises kept.

That's why I want us as governmental leaders, working together, to take another look at Buffalo's waterfront, and to examine the possibility of establishing an independent quasi-governmental entity – having very specific and defined objectives and a limited lifespan – to oversee and manage waterfront development efforts in Buffalo and Western New York.

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The Honorable Joel A. Giambra
The Honorable Anthony M. Masiello
April 7, 2005
Page two

Think of the impact of creating such an entity. At present, waterfront development responsibility, in some form, is the province of federal, state, county and city governments, with additional input from entities such as the United States Coast Guard, New York's Empire State Development Corporation, and public authorities such as the Erie County Industrial Development Authority and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority. Centralizing our efforts to redevelop our region's most significant and undervalued resource would significantly elucidate the bureaucratic haze that exists, resulting in streamlined efforts to project manage the various initiatives that are currently underway on our waterfront.

As I have said time and time again, Buffalo's waterfront is a disgrace and an embarrassment. As each day passes, public frustration with the lack of activity on Buffalo's Inner and Outer Harbor areas is manifest. For a long time, Western New Yorkers have been promised action on Buffalo's waterfront; we all know that many of those promises have been unmet. Buffalo and Western New York need a concerted and singularly focused entity that will set aside politics and geographical fiefdoms to tackle our development fatigue, and to ensure results that yield real results on real projects, with real jobs created, for real people throughout our community.

I encourage you to review the very brief attached fact sheet concerning the goals, objectives and justification for a Waterfront Development Corporation for Buffalo. While hardly comprehensive, I believe it states in clear terms the need for a single independent entity to manage the development of Buffalo's most significant untapped asset, and represents an excellent starting point for discussions among principals like ourselves to create the appropriate vehicle to achieve the tangible results we have so long sought on Buffalo's waterfront.

I believe that this idea represents the best hope our community has for significant and lasting waterfront development that can be accomplished over a short period of time. Let's embrace this opportunity and work together toward the betterment of our community as a whole.

Sincerely,

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress
27th District, State of New York

Encl.